

Academic Help Package

Winter 2017

Are you overwhelmed by course work? Do you realize that you need help? So what can you do? Here is a list to help you out.

1. How bad is it? You need to weigh your pros and cons. Is your term at risk (<60% average?), or just one class? Was it a midterm? Assignment? How much was all this worth?
 - a. Write it down
 - b. Look at the numbers (use the Grades Assessment sheet that is attached, and/or print out your marks from the BB Portal Grade Centre)
2. Can the term/class be salvaged? If so: what do you need to do?
 - a. Manage your time better or learn to study more effectively? (If yes, ask at the FYO front desk about making an appointment with our **Learning Strategist, Michael Richards**)
 - b. Find a study group? Attend Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) (<http://uoft.me/engpass>)?
 - c. Quit that part-time job? Modify your commuting schedule (e.g. leave campus later)?
 - d. Get help – a tutor (<http://tutors.skule.ca>), Academic Success Centre (www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc), TAs (in Tutorial), Profs (before or after lecture, in office hour), Math Aid Office (GB 149, 12:30-2:30 p.m.) – these are your resources. Use them.
3. If the term/class cannot be salvaged (you've looked at the numbers – you can't pass), what are your options?
 - a. Reduce your course load (drop just one course) (**Deadline: March 13, 2017**)
 - i. Yes, you may drop just one course. However, if you do, there are several implications. You will not get any fees refunded from the session. You will also be required to take a summer course to catch up (and you have to pay for that), it can affect student loan funding, scholarships and awards, and you still follow the regular promotion regulations as listed in the 2016-2017 Academic Calendar (<http://uoft.me/engcalendar>)
 - ii. Our programs and the way our courses are offered and structured are very complicated, so this is not possible with every course.
 - b. Transfer to part-time studies (**Deadline: March 13, 2017**)
 - i. This means you will be required to complete your first year of studies over two full academic years.
 - ii. You need to consider funding if you are receiving any. Will you still be eligible?
 - iii. If you are an international student, what are the stipulations on your study visa?
 - iv. Part-time students are subject to the same promotion regulations as full-time students (check them out in the Academic Calendar)
 - c. Withdraw from the program (**Deadline: March 13, 2017**)

4. And what if engineering is not the right program for you? You want to transfer to a different campus/faculty at U of T?
 - a. You can apply for admission to another university/college/program for **September 2017**.
 - b. Your marks earned in Engineering will be what other faculties, universities, or colleges use to decide your admission.
 - c. The process to apply to another U of T campus/Faculty is an Internal Transfer, and it is done through www.adm.utoronto.ca. Deadlines vary by program and campus, but are usually within January-April.

The list above outlines the most common options, but some or none might apply to you, depending on your individual situation. We encourage you to come in to see someone as soon as possible in GB 170 if you still have questions. We'll figure things out together.

The First Year Office Team

Disclaimer: This is meant to be a helpful guide. It is not intended as an authoritative source. In case of any conflicting information, information and regulations in the 2016-2017 Faculty Academic Calendar shall govern.

(<http://www.apsc.utoronto.ca/Calendars/current>)

ACADEMIC SUPPORT - TIP SHEET FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

If you are having difficulty with lecture material....

Be sure to ask your instructor for assistance before or after lecture, if possible. Otherwise, make use of the instructor's office hours to go over any lecture material to receive clarification. You can also use the lecture videos posted on Portal to go over concepts that you're struggling with.

If you are having trouble acquiring all the information taught in lecture...

Employ the use of good note-taking strategies. Feel free to pick up an instruction sheet on the Cornell Note-Taking Method in the First Year Office. Also, consider attending an Academic Success Centre (ASC) Lecture on Note-Taking (www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc/workshops). At the Academic Success Centre you can also drop in to discuss learning strategies, study skills, etc, with a learning skills strategist: www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc/hours. Michael Richards is a Learning Skills Strategist who is available to meet with Engineering students. Appointments can be booked through the First Year Office front desk.

If you are having trouble with your homework or problem sets....

Again, your instructor is a great resource to take advantage of. In addition, you may seek extra help from your TA. Forming a study group is always a good way to work together with your peers to discuss homework and problem sets. The Faculty has arranged Peer Assisted Study Sessions for many courses, and the schedule is available at <http://uoft.me/engpass>.

If you are having trouble with your homework or problem sets in calculus....

Visit the Math Aid Office in GB 149. For more information and office hours, visit: http://www.undergrad.engineering.utoronto.ca/Advising_Support/Academic_Success.htm
You may also want to speak to your math TA for extra help.

Please feel free to read the Math Study Skills pages (created by UTSC) at the following link:

<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/mslc/first-year-students>

If you feel you are just not grasping the course material when you study...

You may need a tutor in a particular course. Check out the Engineering Society's Tutor Exchange at: <http://tutors.skule.ca> Tutors are upper-year or graduate students that are strong in a particular area. Each tutor will have a list of courses next to their name for which they provide tutoring. The Engineering Society only posts this list, they do not monitor how much each tutor charges. Please be sure to negotiate a fair rate with the tutor, directly.

If you are having difficulty with managing your time for the Engineering course load....

Use our Time Management template on the back of this sheet. Also, consider attending a Time Management lecture or workshop at ASC (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc/workshops>), or meeting with a Learning Strategist.

If you are overwhelmed with your Engineering courses and/or your high school study habits are not working for you....

All of the above tips still apply. However, there is a really good book by McGraw-Hill Publishing called *The Engineering Student Survival Guide*, 3rd edition. This book can be purchased from most major bookstores. It is also available from the Engineering and Computer Science Library for a short-term loan.

The First Year Office is always here if you have any questions about your academic success. We are located in GB170 and can be reached at firstyear@ecf.utoronto.ca or 416-978-4625.

Grades Assessment

If you have an appointment with an advisor, please fill this in and bring it with you. We recommend creating a version of this chart yourself using Excel, so that you can use it from semester to semester.

Example:

Course: APS123			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned
Quiz #1	2/5	4 %	1.6 %
Quiz #2	4/5	4%	3.2 %
Test #1	15/20	10%	7.5 %
Total	n/a	18%	12.3 %

Course:			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned

Course:			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned

Course:			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned

Course:			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned

Course:			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned

Top Ten Engineering Study Tips

1. Always do the following when starting a new course:

Read the course syllabus carefully. Find out how to get in touch with your instructor (usually on the course syllabus). Mark important dates and deadlines on your calendar and login and familiarize yourself with the course website.

2. *Always* go to lectures and tutorials.

It is better to get the information you need first hand. This also gives you the opportunity to ask questions right in class, and get your answers right away. You will be able to understand your notes much better than someone else's. It is always easier to fill in the blanks in your own notes from what you remember, than not realizing that your friends' notes completely missed an important point.

3. Do your homework as it is assigned.

Problem sets are one of the best ways to prepare well for tests and exams. You should always devote the time to learn how to do the problem rather than just getting to the final answer. Knowing how to do the problems effectively as you go along will mean that you only need to review for your tests and exams.

4. Learn how to take good notes.

If you don't already know how to take good notes - learn. The poor note taker only writes down 11% of the important information given in lecture. On average, good note takers perform 40% better than their poor note taker counterparts. We like to recommend a modified version of the Cornell Note-taking System. You can talk this method over with someone in the First Year Office, or the Academic Success Centre (www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc).

5. Familiarize yourself with and use your textbook.

Read the table of contents and the preface of the book early on. Always skim the assigned reading before and again after lectures. Look for helpful diagrams. Correlate your lecture to the text, and pick out the important points from each section. Find the problems that apply to the concepts focused on in lecture, and work through them.

6. Study wisely.

Spending more time studying isn't always better. You need to make the time you spend studying worthwhile. Spend more time practicing problems than reading through the textbook. Focus on the priorities in the course. If you get stuck on a problem, don't work backwards from the answer. Ask someone to help you get over your sticky spot. Take breaks, and don't study when you are too tired. Your brain needs time to recharge and to store the information you feed it.

7. Form a study group for each class, and/or attend Peer Assisted Study Sessions (<http://uoft.me/engpass>).

Study with classmates. Try to find a group of people with differences. By helping others, you often solidify concepts better in your own mind. And it is always nice to have someone in your group who can help you.

8. Use all breaks in your schedule wisely.

Have a three hour break? Study in the library, or see if you can get your regular study group together during those breaks. Remember that the "Study Days" and "Reading Week" during the terms are not holidays - they are meant for studying.

9. Study "outside the box".

As a method of review, solve your problem set and textbook questions out of context. Copy them onto cue cards, shuffle them up, and then try to solve them. On a test or exam, your instructor is not going to tell you what theory or topic a question relates to. You need to learn to identify the questions and solving methods on your own.

10. Cramming is not the best way to prepare for a test.

Your brain is a little like your stomach in that it needs time to digest the information you feed it before your body can use it. Learning things a little at a time and giving yourself the chance to work with concepts and build upon them gradually is the best way to study. All cramming does is leave you feeling full and awkward.

All of the above adapted from various online sources:

<http://www.eecs.berkeley.edu/Programs/ugrad/studytips.shtm>,

<http://www.cramster.com/study-tips/>,

<http://www.bcit.ca/distance/currentstudents/online/resources/studytips.shtml>,

http://learning.concordia.ca/Help/handouts/Engineering/Tips_for_Engineers.shtml

My Action Plan

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